

Foreword for the Combined Special Issue on Seedling Production Systems

Steve Harrison · Nestor Gregorio · John Herbohn

Accepted: 12 June 2008 / Published online: 5 August 2008
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Seed collection and seedling production are the initial links in the plantation-based supply chain for timber and non-timber forest products and services. Also, provision of germplasm or *forest reproductive materials* is often a critical step in forestry promotion. Experience indicates that while there are many guides available on good nursery practice, production of high quality seedlings of the range of species desired by potential growers can present great challenges, particularly in developing countries and regions where government, community and private nursery operators are severely resource constrained. In these countries, *tree farming* is potentially attractive to smallholders, and can have major environmental and social benefits to communities.

A research project funded by the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research is investigating methods of improving seedling production in Leyte and Mindanao in the Philippines. One component of this project has been to examine seedling production for non-industrial forestry in other countries in the South-east and East Asian regions. The number of papers attracted on this topic exceeded expectations, leading to production of two combined special issues consisting of 14 papers. Some of these papers have arisen from normal submissions to *Small-scale Forestry*, and some are invited papers. The collection reports research into forestry seedling production systems in the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, Bangladesh and Nigeria.

These papers are published in the belief that the many issues they raise, and the findings they present, will provide some insights and lessons for nursery sector development, including best management practice and policy formulation, in relation to government, community and privately owned seedling nurseries.

A special thanks is due to the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research for financial support for the research leading to a number of these papers.

S. Harrison (✉) · N. Gregorio · J. Herbohn
The University of Queensland, 4072 Brisbane, QLD, Australia
e-mail: s.harrison@uq.edu.au